

1. **Project Title:** Green Property Preservation Project
2. **Entity/Individual nominating the project:** St. Tammany Parish Government
3. **Contact Information:**

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4. **Tier 1 Designation/Tier 2 Designation**
Total CIAP Funds Requested: \$1,000,000.00
5. **Parish CIAP Funds Proposed:**
 - a. Tier 1 \$1,000,000.00
 - b. Tier 2 \$500,000.00
6. **State CIAP Funds Proposed:**
 - a. Tier 1 \$0.00
 - b. Tier 2 \$500,000.00
7. **Infrastructure Funds Proposed:** N/A

8. **Description and Location of Project:**

St. Tammany Parish Government seeks to purchase a 27.2 acre parcel owned by Mr. Haywood Green (herein referred to as the Green property). The property is situated between Bayou Lacombe and the Tammany Trace linear park south of U.S. 190 in Lacombe, Louisiana (Figure 1). Located within the Bayou Lacombe watershed, the land is composed of pristine cypress swamp and bottomland hardwoods (Figure 2). Within the Lacombe watershed, many species of birds utilize the habitat to nest and forage. Especially abundant are migratory waterfowl and neotropical migrants unique to the Mississippi Flyway.

The Parish Government intends to acquire the property to preserve this sensitive wetland from future commercial or residential development. The property will serve as an educational nature preserve that will allow the Parish to educate the public about native flora and fauna, the value of wetland conservation, and the preservation of native Louisiana habitats. To accomplish this goal, a series of interpretive signs that display native fauna and flora, the rate of wetland loss, and unique features of native Louisiana habitats will be placed along a network of trails. Additionally, Parish workers and volunteers will remove invasive plant species and install nest boxes within the property to increase native vegetative cover and enhance the number of cavity-nesting birds.

The Parish Government has applied for property acquisition funds from the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP). Should the Parish Government receive these funds, the grant will be utilized to implement this project. If the Parish is not successful in securing CELCP funding, the CIAP grant will then be utilized to acquire the Green property, as well as implement selected portions of the project.

9. Project Type:

Conservation, restoration and protection of coastal area, including wetland.

10. Project Justification:

a. Is the proposed project free of issues that may impact timely implementation of the project features?

Yes. Mr. Haywood Green is a willing seller and a survey and appraisal are forthcoming.

b. Is the proposed project linked to a regional strategy for maintaining established landscape features critical to a sustainable ecosystem structure and function?

The Parish Government has implemented a conservation program based on recommendations from sections 2.2 and 3.2 of the *New Directions 2025 Critical and Sensitive Areas Phase I Report* (Figure 3) that includes the acquisition of critical and sensitive parcels within a wildlife corridor. On a larger scale, a riparian corridor will extend the entire length of Bayou Lacombe and Bayou Liberty thus connecting Big Branch Marsh National Wildlife Refuge with the Abita Creek Flatwoods (The Nature Conservancy) and the Bogue Chitto National Wildlife Refuge core reserves (Figure 4). This expansive corridor will extend approximately 38 miles and cover a vast array of habitats from brackish marsh to upland pine savannas.

Additionally, this project is part of *St. Tammany Parish's Eco-Tourism Plan* developed by the St. Tammany Parish Government. The design will utilize the Tammany Trace linear park to connect a network of projects that educate the public about the value of protecting Louisiana's native habitats and wildlife (Figure 5).

c. Does the proposed project protect health and safety or infrastructure of national, state, regional, or local significance? N/A

d. How cost effective is the proposed project? N/A

e. What is the certainty of benefits resulting from implementation of the proposed project?

The proposed project has a high degree of certainty of benefits. Acquisition of the Green property will generate important ecological and educational benefits. The Parish

Government will educate the public about conservation practices through a series of interpretive programs that emphasize native Louisiana habitats. Terrestrial and aquatic wildlife will benefit through improved species dispersal and foraging area within the corridor. Furthermore, native vegetative cover will proliferate after invasive plants are removed.

f. Does the proposed project address an area of critical conservation/restoration need or high land loss area?

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, St. Tammany Parish is the fifth largest parish in the state and has been the fastest growing parish in Louisiana since the 1970's. Currently, the Bayou Liberty and Bayou Lacombe Watersheds are under increasing pressure from residential and commercial development (Figure 6). In 2002, the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation reported that urbanization in St. Tammany Parish has occurred at a rate of 2,699 acres a year. At this growth rate, urban areas will occupy over 138,000 acres or 1/5 of the Parish by 2025 and almost 1/3 of St. Tammany by 2050. During the study period, more than 52,000 acres of wetland habitat was lost. In response, the Parish developed a regional conservation plan that includes the acquisition of critical and sensitive parcels within the Bayou Liberty and Bayou Lacombe riparian habitat zones (Figure 4).

The wetlands of St. Tammany Parish suffered a devastating blow from Hurricane Katrina on August 29, 2005. The hurricane caused massive tree damage, soil erosion, and increased the transport of non-point source pollutants into our many bayous and streams. Recent satellite imagery illustrates that nearly forty square miles of wetlands within the Lake Pontchartrain Basin were lost during the storm event. The Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry has estimated that over 60% of the standing timber within the Parish was severely damaged and the Louisiana State University Hurricane Center reported that the forest canopy opened to at least 50% of its former tree cover. This one day event exceeded the amount of wetlands the Lake Pontchartrain Basin lost to natural erosion processes from 1990-2000. As wetlands provide our first line of defense for hurricane storm surges and help to minimize flooding, the Parish is committed to restoring these critical coastal resources and protecting the wetlands that remain. The acquisition and maintenance of land within these critical wildlife corridors will prevent further urbanization within this high growth region.

Wildlife must utilize the bayous and streams to move through the watersheds, from the pine uplands to the coastal marshes along the shore of Lake Pontchartrain, assessing different habitats for food sources and cover. Bayou Lacombe is a forested habitat that is home to a number of species of concern, including two endangered species, the Red-Cockaded Woodpecker and Louisiana Quillwort. The pristine habitat of Bayou Lacombe merits protection for its wildlife.

11. Project cost share: In-Kind services

The Parish Government will administer all phases of planning which includes recruiting local volunteers (i.e. Friends of Louisiana Wildlife Refuges) to help install nest boxes and plant native vegetation. Moreover, the Parish Department of Public Works and volunteers (i.e. Boy Scouts) will conduct all necessary maintenance.